Summer 2013

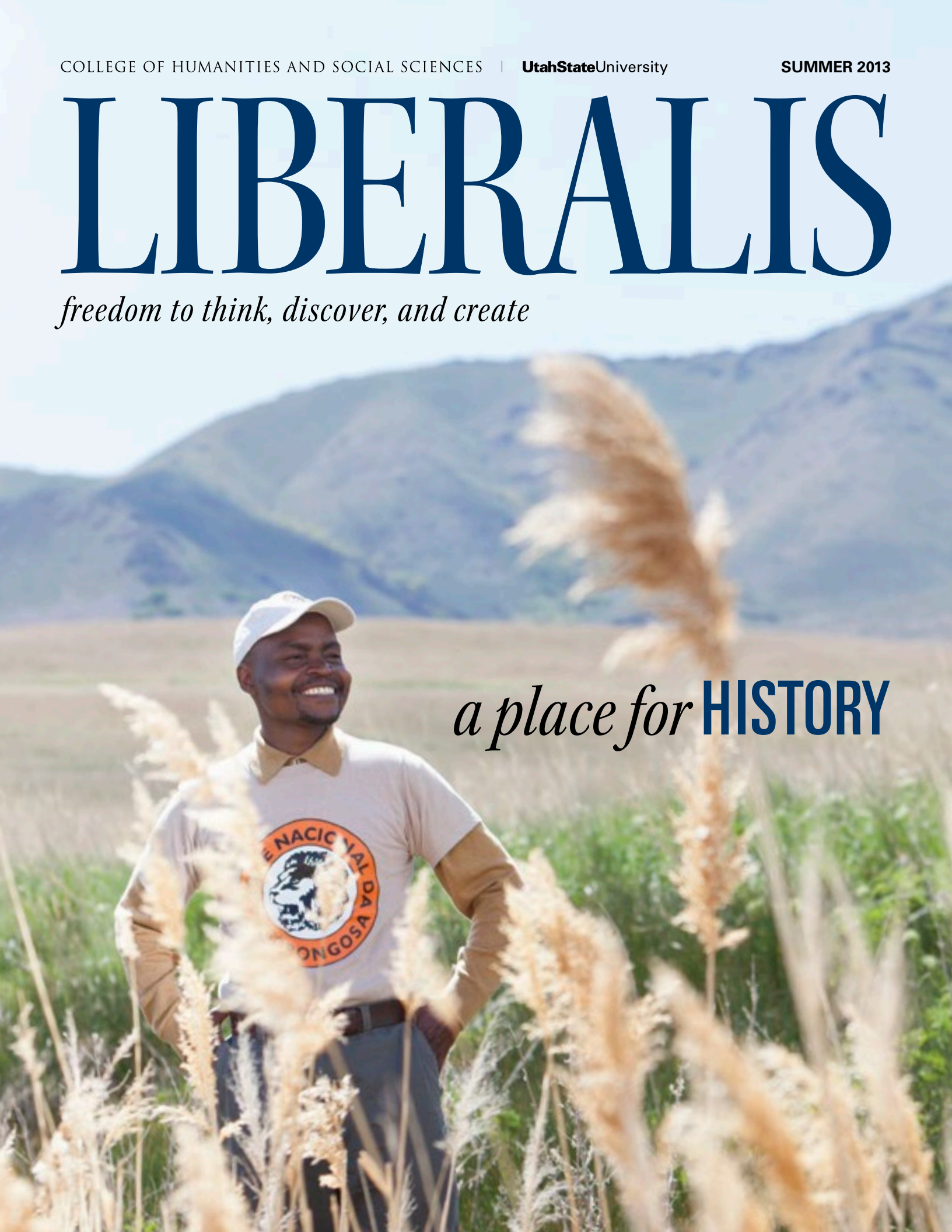
LIBERALIS, Summer 2013

Utah State University

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES | UtahStateUniversity SUMMER 2013

LIBERALIS

freedom to think, discover, and create



a place for HISTORY

Dean John C. Allen

a message from the dean JOHN C. ALLEN

JULY IS A TIME WHEN WE reflect on the end of another academic year here on campus. And it has been a very good year. As I stood on the stage at graduation and shook hands with about 400 students from our college, I could not be more proud of their accomplishments and of our faculty. One student was heading to South America to join the Peace Corps, another was off to work in the National Football League, and several more were moving on to positions with state agencies in Utah and New Mexico. I was actually a little jealous of them as they headed out into the world to make their mark.

At the end of the day, that is what the College of Humanities and Social Sciences aims to do: make a difference. In this edition of *Liberalis* you will read about innovators and game-changers in the college. Our cover story "A place for history" describes the ongoing efforts of Domingos Muala, a graduate student in history, to gather the voices of local people in and around Gorongosa National Park in Mozambique. His work is supported by environmental history professor Chris Conte and alum Greg Carr, who has partnered with the Mozambican government to rehabilitate the country's flagship national park after it was ravaged during the civil war. The effort to salvage the voices of local people and endemic wildlife in the region is truly inspiring.

Other stories I am excited to share with you are about our undergraduate students. For example, you will read about Briana Bowen, who was named a Truman Scholar this spring. She is the first female Truman Scholar from Utah State University and her dream to work in policy and specifically, health policy, illustrates the high ambitions of our students. I have worked with Briana on various university committees and she exemplifies the quality and commitment of our students.

Another student highlighted is junior Taylor Halversen. She was the sole student speaker at the university's TEDx conference in November and spoke of her conversion in learning. After participating in an experimental design studio course her freshman year, the university is the beneficiary of her insights. Through hands on learning by Taylor and her peers in the class, future students at Utah State will have a more streamlined experience navigating the university and connecting with their classmates.

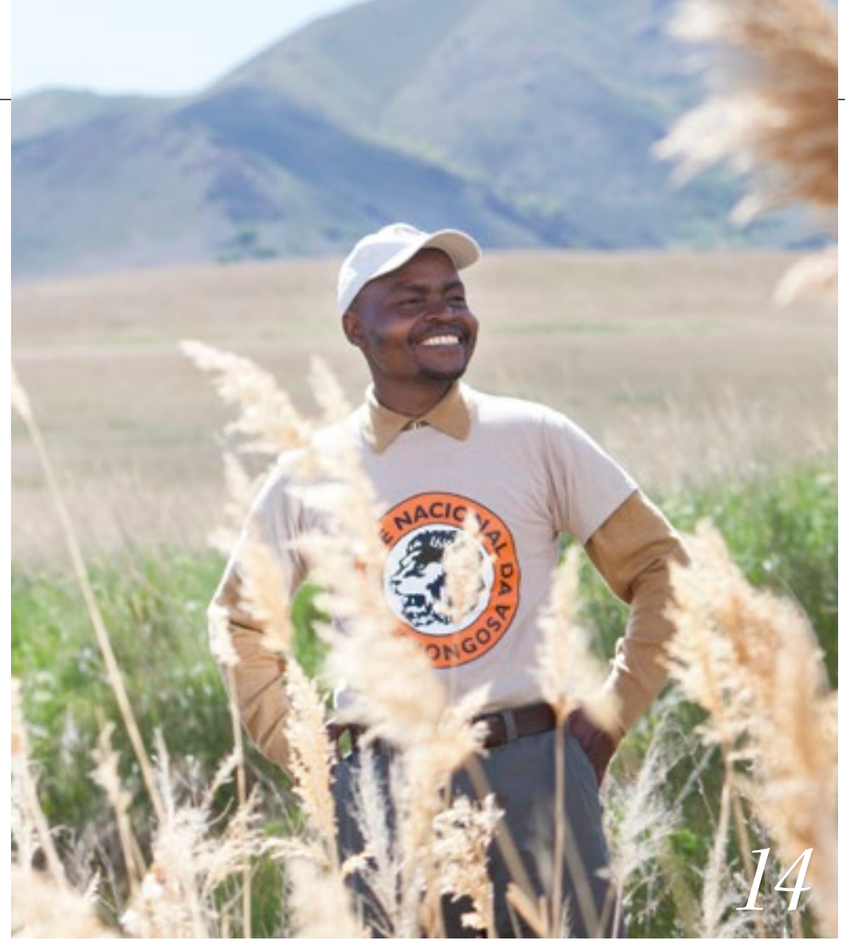
In this issue you will also meet some faculty in our college who strive to improve their classrooms and the world beyond. In the story "What the dead can tell us" you will have a chance to meet Patricia Lambert, associate dean and professor of anthropology, who was selected as a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She is one of three current faculty members at Utah State who hold this esteemed position. Her work on warfare studies is internationally recognized and we are very fortunate to have Patricia as a leader in our college.

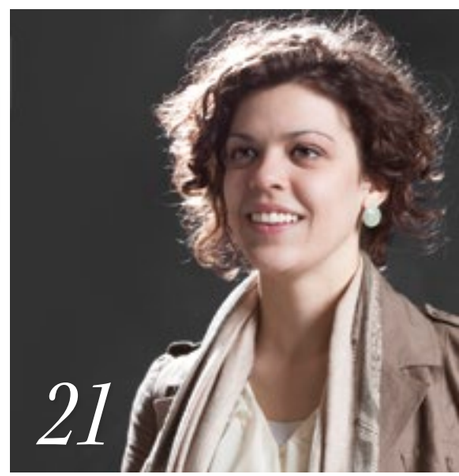
The story "Rethinking higher education" features three faculty members, including Bonnie Glass-Coffin, Harrison Kleiner, and Matt Sanders, who are evaluating teaching and learning styles to help all of us be better educators. Their ideas continue to make our college a place for students to learn and grow. Another innovator on our faculty is Jeannie Johnson, assistant professor of political science, who has devised a new methodology to help U.S. intelligence agencies do a better job understanding conflicts around the world by incorporating culture into intelligence analysis.

These are just snapshots of some of the individuals in our college whose work deserves spotlighting. In the year ahead we will continue to focus on supporting people in our college. Last year, we were able to provide more than 340 students with scholarships because of the support of our alumni, faculty, and even other students. Some videos of our scholarship recipients describing how financial support has made a difference in their lives have been placed on our website www.chass.usu.edu/studentopportunityfund

I hope you enjoy viewing them. Thank you for your support and we look forward to seeing you when you are on campus.

John C. Allen, Dean





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on the cover

ON THE COVER: Graduate student Domingos Muala, a communications officer at Gorongosa National Park in Mozambique, visits Antelope Island State Park.

features

LIBERALIS

Liberalis was derived from the Latin word pertaining to freedom, generosity, and honor. These words reflect the values of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. We try to cultivate in ourselves and in our students the freedom to explore new ideas, cultures, and problem solving, and to affirm the dignity and honor of all human beings.

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campus NOTES

LINGUIST HONORED FOR DIVERSITY EFFORTS

Karin deJonge-Kannan, a senior lecturer in the Languages, won one of five USU Diversity Awards in 2012. She has co-authored several national grants that have brought international students and scholars to study and teach at Utah State. The funding is designed to enhance relations between different cultures. Most recently, she and Maria Luisa Spicer-Escalante, an associate professor of Spanish and linguistics, were awarded a grant from the Institute of International Education's Council for Exchange of Scholars. The funding will allow the university to host the 2013 summer cohort of visiting Fulbright Scholars from Iraq. Read her column on the importance of hosting international scholars on page 34.

STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM FACULTY MENTORSHIP

Joyce Kinkead, professor of English, became the first humanist named a Council on Undergraduate Research Fellow last summer, an honor that carries a $5,000 prize for student researchers at a fellow's institution. Kinkead, the college's 2013 Researcher of the Year, devised a call for proposals for student research projects in the English department. Five students were awarded funding. They partnered with faculty mentors and used the funds to visit historic sites, research in archives, present at conferences, and as leverage to gain additional research funding. For example, Joshua McDermott traveled to Palmyra, New York, and Kirtland, Ohio, to write a braided essay about his spiritual journey retracing the path of Joseph Smith. "CUR has been one of the best, and most useful, experiences I've had as an undergraduate," McDermott wrote of the experience. "It felt wonderful to have resources to undertake research I was interested in, and to explore a topic, through self-discipline, that I cared about."

SOCIOLOGY STUDENT SELECTED FOR PRESTIGIOUS SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAM

Holly Milar was one of eight students selected from a nationwide pool of undergraduates for the prestigious National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates at the University of Texas at Austin. The 2013 program is titled *Race, Ethnicity, and the Demography of Crime*. Over the course of eight weeks, students are paired with graduate mentors and pursue original research. Milar will focus on whether deviant behaviors are categorized as criminal based on the demographics of the population most likely to participate in them. Students receive a $4,000 stipend for participation in the program to allow them to focus on their studies. Their papers will be presented at the fall meeting of the American Society of Criminology.

FULBRIGHTS AWARDED TO PROFESSOR AND STUDENT

Poet Michael Sowder, an associate professor in the English department, was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to return to India to continue work on a forthcoming book. A seed grant from the college enabled him to travel to India two years ago to write his most recent collection *House Under the Moon*, published last year by Truman State University Press. Sowder's forthcoming book *Fire in the Heart* will be a spiritual memoir. Senior Anna Guadarrama, a double major in Spanish and International Studies, received a Fulbright U.S. Student award to teach in Mexico this summer. She has presented research at competitive undergraduate conferences, including research on Capitol Hill in Salt Lake City. Guadarrama completed an Honors Thesis on Che Guevara with Professor J.P. Spicer-Escalante. Guadarrama was the college's 2013 valedictorian.

AGGIE JOURNALISTS BREAK UNIVERSITY RECORD FOR AWARDS

Utah State University journalists continue to dominate the region's Mark of Excellence Awards competition sponsored by the Society of Professional Journalists. In April, Aggie journalists collectively earned 20 awards across 12 categories. They broke the previous school record and won more awards than any other university in Region 9, which includes universities in Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Wyoming. Sophomore Mackinzie Hamilton's story "*Hillsboro native builds 'Vision of Life' for homeless kids in Ethiopian capital*," won first place for feature writing and was selected as a national Mark of Excellence Award feature story winner. The award will be presented at the Society of Professional Journalists convention in August. Hamilton's story was published by *The Oregonian* and *Mormon Times*.

PORTUGUESE PROFESSOR AWARDED NEH GRANT

Marcos Brasiliero, assistant professor of Portuguese, will head to Sao Paulo, Brazil, this summer for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Seminar "*Brazilian Literature: Twentieth Century Urban Fiction*." He is one of 16 university faculty members nationwide selected to receive an NEH grant to study Brazilian literature at the 4-week seminar. Participants will study five major works of fiction that reflect the country's dynamic and increasingly urban culture. Portuguese is considered a critical language in the United States and the NEH program aims to train more scholars in the field. Professor Brasiliero, a scholar of Brazilian literature and a native of the country, brings expertise in both language and culture to the group.

If you're going to study the remains of the dead, you have to be willing to get out there, sometimes in very difficult circumstances, and explain why science benefits us all. The dead have a lot to tell us.

—Patricia Lambert

what the DEAD CAN TELL US

Sometimes the bones come delivered in a box. They are lighter than one might expect—some mere ounces without the added weight of flesh. And they are often the final words of how a person lived and died. For Patricia Lambert, a bioarchaeologist and professor of anthropology at Utah State, bones are an important voice from the past.

Anthropology professor and Associate Dean Patricia Lambert studies ancient human remains to better understand what the past can reveal about modern human violence.

"I REMEMBER NOT BEING SURE ABOUT the whole thing when I first handled human bones because you're dealing with the taboo—the dead," she said while arranging a skeleton on the table of the osteology lab in Old Main. "Quickly you get over that and are more interested in what the bones can tell you. I certainly think they have a lot to say. It's a way of telling the story of ancient lives using the body."

Bones can reveal the age and sex of an individual at death—even their diet. Bones can show how hard we work. Bony projections and pitting around joints may indicate arthritis, particularly in the bodies of laborers, but also in the elderly. Scarring on the pelvic bones signal a woman has given birth. As Lambert examines remains she looks for abnormalities where breaks healed, or for fractures or punctures in the bones—evidence that may reveal a more sinister end.

Lambert began studying prehistoric violence in 1986 as a graduate student at the University of California at Santa Barbara. She has participated in archaeological projects throughout the Americas, but focuses on the Chumash people of the Northern Channel Islands of California. In the early 1990s, Lambert analyzed the remains and mortuary records of 1,744 individuals for health and violent injury in a sample spanning 7,500 years. By analyzing millennia of violence rather than specific battles, she seeks evidence to explain the causes of violence and warfare in humankind.

"I'm interested in the ultimate cause of violence and what the past can tell us about modern human violence," she said.

AN EFFICIENT TOOL

While Lambert was in graduate school there were ongoing discussions about the causes of war. Many scholars suggested its roots were tied to complex political systems and changes wrought by modern industrialization and that prestate societies in North America were relatively peaceful before Western colonization. But Lambert knew that wasn't right—she knew ancient remains told a different story.

"When I started my career people had a different perspective of the past, a more benign one," she said. "But I've found that it's neither all peace nor all war…and I set out to quantify and explain that." »

RESEARCH

She studied large human skeletal samples to obtain statistically valid results. Based on her investigations, war was (and still is) a predominantly male activity. For example, adolescent and young adult males obtained the majority of cranial injuries from clubbing weapons—the most common injury identified in her data sets. And men were twice as likely as women to be shot with an arrow or spear. Though violence was present throughout the 7,500 year sequence, it did vary considerably in scale and lethality, suggesting that conditions in the physical and social environment played an important role in its prevalence, she said.

At its peak between 600 A.D. and 1350 A.D., 22 percent of adult males in the Santa Barbara Channel Area sustained injuries from spears and arrows. But what led to the uptick in lethal violence? Lambert found significant clues in tree-ring records of climate from the region, which show highly unstable, drought prone conditions prevailed in southern California during this time period.

Lambert went on to conduct the first survey of prehistoric warfare across North America. While she found variations in the types of weaponry and defense tactics used, one constant was the same throughout the regions: violence and war were most widespread during the period A.D. 1000-1400.

"What seems to be changing in California and elsewhere during these years is the climate," Lambert said. That's the only similarity."

As competition for dwindling resources increased so did the scale of conflict. Lambert's work found strong correlations between warfare and drought conditions. She published her findings in the *Journal of Archaeological Research* in 2002. George R. Milner, professor of archaeological anthropology at Penn State University, points to the article as a turning point in the field.

Like Lambert, he specializes in human osteology and studies warfare among small-scale societies. The field is small; it took off only about 25 years ago when Lambert was just coming onto the scene. Before, the idea that ancient skeletal remains could be used for interpreting violence of the past was known, but not priority, Milner said. Lambert's work, "put it on the map as a field of study," he said. "Pat is one of the leading experts."

In November, Lambert's peers elected her to join the elite ranks of the nation's top scientists as an American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellow. There are only two other fellows on the faculty at Utah State. Scholars are chosen on their efforts to advance science or its applications. Lambert was recognized for her contributions to physical anthropology—particularly her research in bioarchaeology, and for her professional service in the ethics and application of repatriation law.

Two decades ago, though anthropologists uncovered defensive walls around villages and skeletons with arrowheads lodged in the bones, most conversations concerning intergroup relationships focused predominantly on cooperative behavior, not violence, Milner said. "It took a while before people got enough data to look at patterns over a larger geographic area and temporal span. We're only in the very early stages, which is precisely the reason we need to have regional sequences."

Milner believes more data needs to be aggregated and examined so a clearer picture of the causes of violence can be determined.

"Conflict has been a very major force in human institutions. Conflict is very much part of the modern world," he said. "It seems like it would be helpful to have a longer term understanding. How was it practiced? It might tell us something about human nature if we had this longer-term trajectory.

'PART OF THE HUMAN STORY'

As bioarchaeologists, Lambert and Milner analyze ancient human remains to gain insights into the history of infectious disease and to address larger questions about human behavior. However, their discipline treads on sensitive ground. Studying human bones in the name of science can be traced back to the earliest physicians trying to advance medicine—a practice that was often performed in secret because it violated cultural beliefs. Anthropologists have another shroud in the past to counter. Before laws existed to protect the rights of indigenous populations, some early collectors, often at the behest of museums, removed artifacts and sacred objects from sites without permission.

In 1990, the U.S. Congress passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) mandating that human remains, sacred objects, and items of cultural significance from federal and Indian lands be made available to federally recognized tribes for repatriation. The purpose was to empower tribes in decision-making regarding the disposition of their ancestral remains. For over 20 years, Lambert has worked to ensure the law addresses the interests of both scientists and indigenous groups.

"Repatriation is a delicate balance," she said.

In some cases, native populations who claim remains bury them in accordance to their traditions. However, once interred the biological evidence is permanently lost. The extraction of ancient DNA from remains—a reality today—was impossible just a decade ago. If remains are reburied before these new scientific techniques become available, all the potential new information we might have gleaned from the bones is gone.

"As a scientist you think, they haven't told us their whole story yet," Lambert said. "To me there is also this curious and complicated ethical question of the rights of the dead to have their story told, versus the rights of the living to control that information, especially in the case of thousand year old remains. I especially confront this issue when studying victims of violence, because today it is often the bodies of genocide victims and those 'disappeared' in war crimes that provide the most compelling evidence in the search for justice. But how do you balance that ethic with the rights of living descendants, who may feel very differently about studying or even handling the remains of the dead?"

Ideally, repatriation efforts bring about respect for the living and the dead, while still permitting scientists to unlock the secrets of the past for generations to come. From 1999-2010, Lambert served on and later chaired the Repatriation Committee of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists. In this capacity she traveled to national conferences and testified before Congress on behalf of the organization concerning the implementation of NAGPRA. The discussions were not always easy, she said. But someone from the scientific community has to do it.

"If you're going to study the remains of the dead, you have to be willing to get out there, sometimes in very difficult circumstances, and explain why science benefits us all," Lambert said. "The dead have a lot to tell us. Their stories tell us where we came from, the struggles our ancestors encountered, and how past humans met some of the same challenges we face today."

Lambert understands that part of the work she performs invites scrutiny. People don't always like it when you study things that seem unnatural or barbaric. Perhaps some things may be too controversial when it comes to studying the dead. For example, investigating the presence of cannibalism in North American populations is an extremely contentious topic in anthropology circles. But Lambert argues that explorations like this are necessary to help identify the conditions that drive people to commit violent acts.

"This is part of the human story," she said. "When you start hiding things, or simply don't report things you think might be unwelcome or controversial, you obscure rather than enlighten the past, and who we are as humans.

'CAREFUL WORK'

There are dozens of sites across the American Southwest where cannibalism is suspected to have occurred. In 1996, Lambert was invited to investigate human skeletal remains from 5MT10010, an abandoned Ancestral Puebloan site along Cowboy Wash in southwestern Colorado. There, the remains of seven people were found dismembered in two subterranean pithouses. The bones contained cut marks where joints were cut apart and muscle stripped from bone, and burn marks as if the flesh had been roasted. The settlement appeared to have been abandoned abruptly around 1150 A.D., in the midst of a 50 year drought in the region.

The investigators suggested the outbreak in violence was exacerbated by environmental conditions and the potential social breakdown of a Puebloan community in Chaco Canyon to the south. As populations settled in new areas and competed for resources, it may have upset existing alliances that had previously maintained peace, they posited in an article in the journal *American Antiquity*.

"We propose that, faced with severe environmental stress, food scarcity, and sociopolitical upheaval in the mid A.D. 1100s, certain groups in the Mesa Verde region used violence to terrorize or even eliminate neighboring villages, and that cannibalism was part of this pattern of violence," they wrote.

However, the article was met with sharp criticism from individuals who argued the evidence simply showed that bodies had been processed—not consumed—and what the scientists had observed was mortuary behavior. Some suggested the state of the bodies indicated the punishment of witches, or was the work of a few deranged individuals. Cannibalism seemed out of the question.

"It's been a big debate because there are so many political undertones to it," said Clark Larsen, chair of the anthropology department at Ohio State University and Lambert's former postdoctoral advisor.

Cannibalism has been documented in societies around the world. Yet, discussing its practice is often out of bounds even for scientists. Lambert's team knew they had to be careful to put forth the claim. When their findings were published the predicted backlash came. And Lambert was ready. She led a meticulous response, reviewing the evidence and assembling a plausible narrative for what occurred at Cowboy Wash.

"The careful work that she does and the arguments that she [includes] in her articles, that's what stands out in her work," Larsen said. "Her arguments are some of the best well-reasoned, clear, and compelling [explanations] of what happened."

The linchpin of the team's claim was the recovery of a human coprolite, human feces, from a pithouse hearth. Preserved human waste was the one link that could connect the disarticulation of remains with consumption of them. Analysis of the coprolite by a procedure known as enzyme immunosorbent assay revealed the presence of myoglobin, a protein found only in human heart and skeletal muscle tissue. It was the first direct evidence of cannibalism in the American Southwest in the prehistoric era. The team published their results in *Nature*.

"What I loved about that experience was I really learned how science works," Lambert said. "Criticism is good. It's important. Disagreement drives science… Sometimes you kind of see what you want to see. Sometimes you don't understand the significance of something until someone else points it out."

She lifted a rib of the skeleton on the table. The remains were purchased from a company that sells biological specimens for academic study. She turned the bone between her fingers and pointed to scarring on the insides—a sign the man had suffered from a lung infection, possibly tuberculosis. Many of the remains Lambert studies are from the disenfranchised, the poor, or the losers in a battle. She believes their voices need to be heard.

When Lambert was working with Larsen at the University of North Carolina, she studied human remains from an unmarked, purported slave cemetery. She tried to learn more about the diet and health of slaves in the region from archival sources, but the information rarely appeared in the ledgers available from era. Slaves weren't in a position to write their history. Lambert could glean what she could only through their remains.

"In those cases you become very aware of how important the study of human remains can be," she said.

It's easy to think that we are different from our ancestors who lived thousands of years ago. That we are much more civilized. However, Lambert argues that we are a lot more alike than we want to admit. We still fight over limited resources. We still kill our fellow man—we just do it differently now. Warfare today may be performed with the touch of a button rather than a club over the head; it may be the ordered action of a nation state rather than a band of brothers seeking revenge against an enemy group. But it's still violence. And it's still happening.

"I think in order to understand violence you have to understand the role of aggression," Lambert said. "Aggression can be an effective tool—it's a behavior we find throughout the animal kingdom. It works to get or defend something…but it's risky and can be very costly."

Acts of aggression can protect a group's resources and can lead to the acquisition of others. But there are also other, more peaceful strategies for achieving these ends. What forces lead to violence and war, and what conditions prevent it from erupting in the first place? Lambert continues to study bones for clues. —*km*

salvaging the MIND

Sharon Willer vowed to never own or learn how to operate a computer. She didn't see how it could improve her life—she'd survived for seven decades without one.

"NEVER," THE 74-YEAR-OLD REPEATED with an emphatic shake of her head.

But Willer changed her mind three years ago when she began having trouble recalling the names of people she knew. During a checkup with her physician she told him she suspected it was Alzheimer's disease. He disagreed, but Willer was still rattled. She knew people with the disease and it scared her. Willer contacted the Uintah Basin Golden Age Center in Vernal where she heard about a computer program there that could help improve brain functioning. She decided to give technology a try.

"I didn't even know how to turn the damn thing on when I stared," she said. "It's been wonderful. It seems like I can remember names longer now."

Willer comes weekly and encourages all of her friends to go to the facility's Brain Exercise Center to use the computers. She admits she comes to the senior center as much for the company as for the brain gym—a series of computer-based games that train and test cognition—but she believes she's making progress.

"It's fun to play the games," Willer said. "Sometimes I get frustrated, but I would tell anyone who can't remember, who doesn't think their mind is working as it should, to come." »

Susan Mansfield coaches seniors at the Uintah Basin Golden Age Center through an exercise testing cognition.

RESEARCH

That's precisely what investigators of a new study on brain cognition want seniors in the community do. Derrik Tollefson, associate professor of social work at Utah State and the principal investigator of the study, partnered with graduate student Susan Mansfield,'14, an intern at the Golden Age Center, to evaluate the brain training program at the facility. In August they will begin recruiting 100 healthy adults over 55 to participate in an 18-month study to test whether a commercial computer software program advertised to restore brain function actually helps stave off dementia. While several are on the market today, there are no longitudinal studies examining their effectiveness and few that determine the most effective type of training. The goal of Tollefson's and Mansfield's study is to determine whether or not the cognitive functioning of participants actually improves with their use.

The specific program targeted is developed by the company Scientific Brain Training. The series under evaluation is the company's Aging Well Program, which consists of a series of 22 games that test an individual for memorization, visual and spatial abilities, executive function, attention, and language. A secondary component of the study is to determine if physical exercise and social interaction also affect cognitive functioning.

"We don't know if it's going to transfer over to real life," Tollefson said. "We want to try and isolate as much as possible the effect of scientific brain training. I think the study we've designed will do that—if we find something that can maintain a person's cognitive functioning that is great."

The Brain Exercise Center opened in 2011—the same year the first of the Baby Boomers turned 65. The birthday used to signal retirement. However, nowadays it carries other connotations as well; many symptoms of Alzheimer's disease manifest around this age. Vernal's brain gym is the result of a $1 million gift from local resident Robert Williams who witnessed others live with Alzheimer's. He funded the center to help salvage the minds of individuals with dementia. He passed away this spring.

"This program exists here because of his generous donation and his commitment to helping others who might be in this situation," Tollefson said.

THE SILVER TSUNAMI

Alzheimer's disease is often called the long goodbye. Early symptoms typically present as memory impairment—forgetting words or repeating questions—and as the disease progresses, brain cells and brain function are destroyed. Eventually, individuals are robbed of their independence. Everyday tasks like eating and bathing may become impossible to accomplish. Language is lost. To date, there is no cure or pharmacological treatment to effectively prevent or treat the condition, and little can be done to alter its course. The physiological mechanisms that lead to Alzheimer's remain unknown, but one fact is clear: the disease discriminates against age. Most cases occur in people aged 60 or older.

"The longer you live, the higher your risk is," said Mansfield. "There's more to Alzheimer's than losing your memory, you lose your executive function."

The portion of the brain in charge of decision making gradually atrophies. For example, deciding what to wear or what to watch on television becomes truly difficult. Mansfield first really appreciated the challenges of losing one's executive function when her mother moved into her home a few years ago.

"I was not understanding the difficulty she was having," she said from her office at the senior center.

If delaying the onset of Alzheimer's is possible, the economic and social ramifications would be staggering. Nationwide, more than 5 million individuals are estimated to have Alzheimer's and millions more family members and loved ones provide informal, unpaid care for them. In April, the *New England Journal of Medicine* published a report estimating the annual direct cost of care for Alzheimer's patients in the United States is about $109 billion dollars—more than the amounts for cancer or heart disease. The figure balloons to nearly $215 billion when unpaid care is included in the tally. National health expenditures are projected to more than double by 2040 because of the nation's aging baby boomer population. Demographers have referred to the wave as the "silver tsunami."

In 2011, President Barack Obama signed the first national plan to combat Alzheimer's disease. The National Alzheimer's Project Act requires the coordination of research and services across federal agencies and the acceleration of treatments developed to prevent, stop, or reverse its effects by 2025. Treating and caring for the growing number of individuals with Alzheimer's is a major public health concern. Nineteen states, including Utah, which has the highest prevalence of cases, have adopted measures from the national report and devised their own plans. The number of Alzheimer's cases is expected to grow by 127 percent by 2025.

"With population growth, life expectancy, and retirees coming to the state, Utah is about to experience an aging tsunami in the next decade," Utah's 2012 report reads. "This unprecedented growth will have a marked impact on Utah's healthcare system, not to mention families and caregivers."

In Utah, families provide the bulk of the care for loved ones at an estimated cost of $1.8 billion annually, according to the state's action plan. Among the strategies recommended in the report are to raise awareness about Alzheimer's symptoms, treatment, and support for caregivers, as well as to promote a robust wellness agenda involving exercise, nutrition, and embracing initiatives that protect brain health such as the brain gym movement. Mansfield has advocated along with the Utah Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association at the state capitol for funded programs. At this time, the Utah legislature has not yet funded any programs within the plan; however, she intends to continue the effort, she said.

CHANGING THE COURSE OF ALZHEIMER'S

Next to Mansfield's office a potential intervention may be plugged into the wall. About a dozen seniors face glowing computer screens and follow along as an instructor teaches a beginner course about using the Internet. After a few minutes it becomes evident some have departed the lesson in favor of playing brain training computer games. Across the hall in a pristine workout room, a man in a tracksuit performs quad exercises in the gym. Next door, two others play pool and lean against their cues chatting between shots.

"Baby boomers are more health conscious than other generations have been," Mansfield said. "And their attitudes about aging are not complacent."

Historically, they are a generation that demanded more from the government in terms of education when they were young and now require different types of services as they age. Their mindset about Alzheimer's is different than in the past. Rather than viewing losing their memory as a fact of life, it's a problem that needs solving, Tollefson said. "Their attitude is we don't have to put up with this, we can change the course of this disease."

That is the hope.

Autopsies of those with Alzheimer's show amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles in the brain. However, promising new therapies cannot be developed without first understanding what exactly causes neuron functioning in the brain to deteriorate. Current research suggests a host of factors may contribute to disease expression and progression. Several recent studies indicate a combination of genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors may be at play.

Associations between Alzheimer's and conditions such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and obesity have been found. Additionally, some studies suggest a lifestyle that includes a nutritious diet, exercise, education, and social and mental stimulation may reduce risk of Alzheimer's. The National Institutes of Health held a summit in 2012 to identify research priorities and strategies for treating and preventing Alzheimer's. The recommendations included pursuing clinical trials in asymptomatic and cognitively impaired adults to determine the effectiveness of interventions like physical exercise and cognitive training.

Utah State has tackled Alzheimer's on several research fronts for decades.

In 2012, researchers of the Cache County Memory, Health, and Aging Study discovered a rare mutation in the TREM2 gene that was more likely to appear in people with Alzheimer's. Earlier this year, JoAnn Tschanz, a psychology professor at USU, found caregiver coping mechanisms may play an important role in the progression of Alzheimer's. For example, positive strategies such as seeking greater social support and counting blessings were associated with slower patient decline. The research was published in *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* in January. Tollefson and Mansfield's study is the latest to assess factors contributing to the disease. The project is funded by grants from the Uintah Health Care Special Services District and the Uintah Impact Mitigation Special Services District.

The study is a new area of investigation for Tollefson. His research tends to focus on children and family violence issues rather than geriatric health. However, he has considerable experience evaluating social service programs for the state. He enlisted Mansfield to assist with monitoring the research after her field experience in the social work program brought her to the Golden Age Center. She aims to boost participation in services offered there such as the brain exercise center and field trips, but getting seniors in the door can be tricky, she said.

"Some don't want to come to the Golden Age Center because they perceive it's for old people—not them," Mansfield said. "The actual purpose of senior centers is to keep people independent."

She hopes that, in time, the center will become more of a community center where all people come to enjoy and benefit from its services. Last fall, she and Tollefson held a memory screening for the community to help educate it on the signs of normal aging. Through the study and beyond, Mansfield is committed to helping Vernal become what it needs to be for its aging population.

"I'll be around for a while," she said. "I want to see 10 to 15 years down the road what has happened. —*km*

BELOW: Susan Mansfield is assisting Derrik Tollefson, associate dean of the Uintah Basin campus, with a study evaluating brain training computer programs.

a place for HISTORY

By Kristen Munson

The Mountain was made by Mulungu, by God. All of us, even those who can walk only with a stick, or have to be carried, found the Mountain here. It was made before our ancestors were born when all the land here was created.

—excerpt from *Tales from Gorongosa*

CHRIS CONTE BOARDED A plane for a six-week tour of Africa in 2011. His itinerary included stops in remote sections of Mozambique and Tanzania where some of the world's most ecologically diverse landscapes are in jeopardy. Conte, an environmental history professor at Utah State, went to observe conservation efforts underway. In order for indigenous people to be stakeholders, he argues they need to be a part of the process.

"Some of the best development projects come out of local innovations," Conte said. "If you want to do conservation then you must know an area's environmental history. It explains how these landscapes have changed over time. It helps us understand the restoration and degradation processes. What was the cause of degradation? How did people rebuild these landscapes in the past? That history is rarely told."

He traveled to the outskirts of Tanzania to the fledgling Gombe School for Environment and Society (GOSESO) where its founder Yared Fubusa, PhD '10, has spent much of the past decade securing public support and private funding to build a school in his hometown. He established it to promote environmental stewardship in the region by fostering grassroots conservation initiatives and economic »

History professor Chris Conte (left) recruited Domingos Muala (right) to Utah State to learn how understanding a place's environmental history is necessary for preserving its future.

sustainability. Conte served as a faculty advisor to Fubusa at Utah State and is now a member of the school's International Advisory Board. He got involved because it was a cause he could get behind.

"I have been going to East Africa for a long time; it's nice to see homegrown initiatives—they work a lot better," he said.

He also visited Gorongosa National Park, a wildlife refuge in the Great African Rift Valley that was once one of Africa's most biologically diverse habitats and a hotspot for celebrities. However, when civil war broke out in 1977, millions of Mozambicans were displaced. Some fled to the rainforest on Mount Gorongosa, a 6,100 foot peak rising out of floodplains of the park, to hideout from the rebel political group Renamo that used the area as a military encampment. During the 16-year conflict, a majority of its large mammals were slaughtered for food by militants and local populations.

"They killed just about everything," Conte said.

While two decades have passed since the signing of the peace accord, bullet holes still mar the side of park headquarters in Chitengo and serve as a reminder of what happened there, Conte said. He went to Gorongosa to enlist a local person to document its past and to witness ongoing restoration efforts spurred by Greg C. Carr, '82, an alumnus of the history department who has partnered with the Mozambican government to rehabilitate the park.

BELOW: Humanitarian Greg Carr, '82, has partnered with the Mozambican government to restore its flagship national park.

Carr amassed much of his wealth in the field of telecommunications after co-founding Boston Technology Inc.—a global communications firm that specialized in voicemail technology, and chairing the early online service provider Prodigy in the late '90s. However, Carr stepped down from his for-profit ventures in 1999 to devote himself full-time to humanitarian work. The restoration of Gorongosa is a long-term investment for him. Carr's philanthropic organization, the Carr Foundation, has pledged 20 years and millions more in funding to assist the project.

Conte kept a travel diary during his tour of Africa. The following is from an entry of his visit to Gorongosa:

Violence has played a central role in the park's history, as it has for many parks in eastern and southern Africa. A history of Gorongosa must account for how violence has contributed to transformations in land use and land cover. My purpose in visiting Gorongosa was to identify a potential Mozambican student who might be able to write such a history. I have succeeded.

The person he found was Domingos Muala, a communications officer at Gorongosa National Park who serves as an interpreter and conduit between the organization and local communities. He understands the interests of the park and the people who have lived on the land when it was a sanctuary from war. He is a former teacher in the region.

"When I met Domingos I thought to myself: 'this person is unique in the world,'" said Carr. "He was born and raised in a remote Mozambican mountain community, speaks the local language and is immersed in its culture. Yet, he pursued an international education. As such, he understands Western Civilization, can quote our philosophers, knows our history. He is also fluent in English and Portuguese. As such, he is the ideal bridge between these two cultures. He is full of compassion, understanding and good will."

Conte calls Muala "a healer" of sorts. Locals still refer to him as "teacher." He may need to be both.

'A SPECTACULAR PARK'

The first boundaries of Gorongosa were drawn nearly a century ago as a 1,000 kilometer hunting preserve. The Mozambican government declared Gorongosa a national park in 1960 and was a draw for tourists around the world to view one of Africa's densest concentrations of large mammals. But decades of violent conflict and poaching decimated animal populations by upwards of 90 percent by the turn of the century. The opportunity for revival came in 2004 when Carr was invited to join the Mozambican government on a project to create jobs in rural areas of the country. He visited Goronogosa and saw its potential to boost sectors, including ecotourism, conservation, education, and park administration.

"This is a spectacular park and it could become one of the best in Africa with some assistance," Carr wrote in Gorongosa's guest book. His foundation became that assistance through the Gorongosa Restoration Project.

In 2008, he signed a 20-year agreement with the government of Mozambique to restore the ecology of the park and jointly manage sustainable development of Gorongosa and its buffering communities. Afterward Carr is to walk away from park operations. However, for the effort to be successful, it has to be run by Africans, he said. They have to be invested in it.

"A healthy environment and healthy people are interconnected," Carr said. "The people of Mt. Gorongosa cannot keep their families together if they cannot earn a livelihood on the land that they love. For that land to continue to give blessings, they'll need to implement the principles of conservation agriculture and sustainable use of all natural resources."

Each year, 20 percent of park entrance fees are distributed to surrounding communities for development projects such as the building of schools and health centers. Park officials have made hiring local personnel a priority. Ninety-nine percent of the employees of the restoration project are Mozambican, Carr said. Wildlife populations have begun to rebound after buffalo, elephants, wildebeest, and hippos were reintroduced to the preserve. The tourists have also returned. However, the effort is not without setbacks. After Mt. Gorongosa was annexed into the park's boundaries, some residents set fire to a hillside in protest of rumors that they would be pushed out.

In October, leaders of Renamo set up camp outside their former stronghold after taking issue with their representation in the Mozambican government. During a follow up trip in 2012, the situation around the park was tenuous, Conte said. He witnessed as area police and militants began carrying weapons. Conte hiked Mt. Gorongosa with Muala and saw the burned hillside.

"It's a message: 'don't come here,'" Conte said. "All the restoration work could be reversed in a short period of time. How do you save these amazingly beautiful places? People have to eat."

Much of the land outside the park has been deforested with much of the wood headed to China. Muala led Conte to the site of an abandoned gold mining operation where a nearby riverbed was contaminated with mercury. The scene disturbed Conte. In his retelling of the story, he recalls looking at the churned soil and asking Muala whether the site could ever be healed.

Absolutely! he replied.

"I'm still not convinced, but I think that's the kind of attitude that's necessary," Conte said.

Both men sit in Conte's office at Utah State discussing Muala's studies. He is a full head shorter than his professor and has a tendency to laugh easily. Conte is harder to tease out a smile. When asked how he could assist restoration efforts in the region, he was candid about his limitations and motivations.

"I am not involved in research there; I'm interested in getting the local people involved," he said. "My role is to find people like Domingos. I can't do something, but he can. The solution has to come from Mozambique. Once we find someone like that we have to help them."

There may be something else at play. Recruiting Muala and assisting him in his graduate study may be Conte's way of clearing an outstanding debt. He is the author of *Highland Sanctuary: Environmental History in Tanzania's Usambara Mountains*, a book he wrote after spending months in the country gathering the environmental history of the mountains. He did it with the assistance of a local a high school history teacher named Peter Mlimahadala who spoke the five languages necessary to conduct field interviews in the region. The work may not have been possible without him.

"People shared their stories, their lives with me," Conte said. "I just took, took, took. I always felt like a bit of a carpetbagger. With Domingos, I feel like I'm giving back. And I feel good about that. When I met him, it was obvious to me that he should be doing graduate study."

He will advise Muala on a project to complete the environmental history of Gorongosa National Park that will include the oral history of local populations for public display. It is continuation of work Muala has already been performing in the region for years. When the two first met, Muala showed Conte a copy of *Tales from Gorongosa*, a collection of stories he collected and translated from local populations about the mountain they call home. The Carr Foundation published it in 2010.

Producing *Tales from Gorongosa* was important to Muala to connect the people living in and around the park to the land. When he was first hired at Gorongosa, he began researching its history using the books available in the office. But the more Muala read, the more he noticed something was missing.

"Scarcely you would see a paragraph on local people," he said. "There was a lot of information about birds and animals and plants, but not about people—and they are part of it."

Often conservation efforts in Africa do not involve local communities, Conte said. Part of it originates from when the early European explorers first arrived on the continent and saw tracts of open space and an abundance of wildlife. Their accounts did not often include the people already living there and contributed to the idea that Africa was a place untouched by man.

"This is where history has a place," Conte said. "These are landscapes that have been used for thousands of years. We are trying to dispel the notion that these are pristine places."

'AN INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTION'

There are two seasons in Gorongosa: rainy and dry. After the rains stop, traditional leaders in the surrounding communities hold a *mbamba*, a ritual blessing of the park and its visitors. In the past, the ceremony was performed before dangerous activities such as hunting or travel. It maintains a community's ties to the dead by channeling the ancestor spirits to protect those involved, Muala said. Each year before Gorongosa opens to tourists, the leaders hold a *mbamba* to bring everyone involved together. Carr goes. Community members attend. So do top government officials. After attending his first *mbamba* at Gorongosa, Muala began wondering what else these traditional leaders might know about the parkland.

ABOVE: Muala travels to the surrounding communities of Gorongosa to gather stories from village elders.

"I thought maybe I could help a little by learning about how this place used to be," he said.

Muala approached them about sharing their knowledge with him on the weekends. They agreed. Once Carr learned Muala was performing this type of outreach he gave him a stipend to travel to gather more.

"I was thrilled when Domingos showed me the hundreds of pages of local stories and interviews he was collecting," Carr said. "Very few of those cultural treasures have ever been written down. I felt that he was making an invaluable contribution to those people and also to the whole world to keep this knowledge alive. As Domingos studies environmental history he'll be in a »

better position to see and teach from a larger perspective."

Both Carr and Conte speak of Muala's ability to transcend cultural boundaries. However, Muala sees himself as something of a collector with a mission.

"There has to be somebody to collect what remained after the years of civil war," he said.

The communities surrounding Gorongosa were some of the country's last holdouts to colonialism. They resisted occupation until 1917, Muala said. As the southern portion of the country boomed with new development, central and northern Mozambique remained largely ignored.

"Education was introduced to Gorongosa very, very late," Muala said. "It was an island."

The region remained underdeveloped after the civil war. During the conflict, roads to and around the park were destroyed. Building public services such as schools or hospitals seemed out of the question. More than 15 different communities occupy the buffer zone around the park and they are among the most marginalized populations in the country, Muala said.

In 2001, when he arrived to teach in the community of Villa Gorongosa, he had no idea the park existed for the first 18 months he was there. Muala eventually learned of it through his students who told him they would hunt there with their parents—a term he later would understand meant poaching. People outside the park, including himself, bought meat that likely came from animals poached there, he said. "That's the practice until somebody tells you it's wrong."

In a small conference room in Old Main Muala spreads a map of Mozambique on a table. He points to the splotch of green that represents Gorongosa National Park. Muala bows his head while listening, taking each question in before answering. He brings his lips together in a tight smile before answering. He knows the path seems difficult to imagine. *But things will be fine. You will see.*

"Conservation," he repeats. "I met that word several times during my study. But it is like seeing someone on the street. I never knew or understood what it meant until I was introduced."

It is a word you need context for.

'THINGS CAN CHANGE'

Muala was raised by relatives during the civil war and attended seminary school in the coastal city of Beira. But instead of becoming a friar, he chose to pursue teaching because he learned he was not supposed to be reading things like Nietzsche. And he enjoyed reading Nietzsche. Though Muala left the Franciscan order, he still adheres to many of its tenets.

"We value every living thing from human to the microscopic organism," he said. "Working in the park is the appropriate place [for me]. I began to understand that conservation was not just about animals and plants, it was also about humans."

He hopes that his work gathering the local and environmental history can be used to encourage the country's Ministry of Education to make changes in its curriculum. Perhaps they could include the local African history in addition to that of its colonial past, Muala said.

When Conte pitched the idea of pursuing graduate study at Utah State, Muala liked the idea of learning the theory of environmental history. He believes the experience will benefit him and the local communities because he will be able to do it better. Conte reasons that compiling and teaching the local history is necessary if sustainable conservation efforts stand a chance.

"If you lose that centeredness in a place, in a landscape, then you're apt to destroy it," he said. In the communities around Gorgongosa, village elders play important roles. They operate often in parallel with government officials, but hold a different type of authority. They are problem solvers, rainmakers, and medicine men. The elders know the story of the land. They know the labor and generations that has been invested in it over time.

"Somebody like me," Conte said, "I could never get that type of information."

Muala can. He has local ties. He has their trust. During Conte's last visit to the park, Muala took him to Mt. Gorogonsa where they visited tree nurseries and met with community elders. It was not a place Conte could have gone alone. And the stories they shared would not have been repeated without proper respects paid first. For instance, one may need to ask a village elder for permission to enter the community.

"If you know their culture, you know how to get to someone's house," Muala said.

Muala has written a second book *Voices of Mount Gorongosa* about the history of the mountain.

"Local people are very wise in terms of knowledge," he said. "Most of the local knowledge is stored in the memory. When you lose these people you lose the local encyclopedias."

He is trying to capture it before the elders pass. And they are passing. Flipping through photographs on his laptop Muala points to various men who died shortly after he interviewed them.

"I am kind of a voice," he said. "I listen. I take notes and I write the stories down. Then I return them. That's the purpose of collecting—returning."

Muala always gives people he interviews a copy of his work–even if they can't read—because it is their story. And it is changing, as stories are apt to do over time. Gorongosa has been many things to different people. Getting them on the same page will likely produce some friction. Muala suggests educating local communities about the impacts of pollution, poaching, and water management may help alleviate some tension. He believes common interests exist between all.

"This is possible," Muala said. "I think I am optimistic that things can change. They don't change on their own. We have to do something and education is of course one of the tools…Working together means understanding wants and needs. The park needs to understand its community and the community needs to understand the park."

In remote portions of Mozambique, a shift is coming. Elders are dying at the same time area youth are gaining exposure to modern comforts through film. Muala recognizes his work needs to appeal to younger generations who are growing up with a different perspective of the park and what it means to them. They need context for the past. Throughout the year, local children are bused to the community education center at Gorongosa National Park and have their entry fees waived. Otherwise, some could not afford to visit this special place in their own backyard. And they need to come to understand why it needs to be saved.

"When they visit the park it is to teach them," Muala said. "In the end, in the future, they will be the ones taking over." ■

HONOR *and* RESPONSIBILITY

By Kristen Munson

My own personal worldview is 20 percent idealism—raw unfettered idealism—10 percent absolute cynicism, and 70 percent pragmatism. —Briana Bowen, '14

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 100 YEARS TO change the world, why wait another day? That's how Briana Bowen has approached her life since being diagnosed with thyroid cancer her freshman year at Utah State. She was lucky. The mysterious lump in her throat was caught early—and she had the health insurance to do something about it. Those facts are not impervious to the political science major. Afterward Bowen's worldview shifted.

"Life became much more of a tangible journey," Bowen said. "I have 80 years left to change the world and I don't want to waste my time."

Her experience undergoing treatment for cancer coincided with the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010—the first major overhaul of the nation's healthcare system since 1965. Since entering remission Bowen's attention has focused on healthcare policy in the United States. »

Briana Bowen is the first Utah State University student awarded the Truman Scholarship since 1984.

"I was really fortunate," she said. "It was the most merciful diagnosis one can get. My parents had excellent health insurance. But what happens to people who don't?"

In 2011, Bowen worked as a public policy intern with the Health Leadership Council, a healthcare advocacy group in Washington, D.C., to find out. She attended Congressional Committee meetings, tracked legislative developments, and studied the gaps in health insurance systems.

"I think it's a good sign when something this nuts and bolts [oriented] captures your interest," she said.

Bowen's resume is an exhaustive list of accomplishments and volunteerism: regional field director for the Scott Howell for U.S. Senate Campaign in 2012; president of the USU College Democrats; lobbying chair for the USU Government Relations Council; Honors student; undergraduate teaching assistant; and survivor chair for the American Cancer Society Relay for Life. She represented Utah State at the Democratic National Convention in the fall and attended the U.S. Presidential Inauguration as a civilian security captain with the U.S. Secret Service in January.

"She's all over the place," said Michael Lyons, associate professor of political science.

He has worked with Bowen since her first semester when his teaching assistants repeatedly flagged her work as best in the class. Lyons pulled her aside and let her know her work was noticed and appreciated.

"She is intellectually gifted, self-confident, independent, and disciplined—the whole package," he said. "She's not just a grind it out 4.0 A plus student." (Which she is.) However, Lyons points to her willingness to work with people who have differences in opinion as one of her best qualities.

"It is something I admire and respect about her," he said. "She's very good at dealing with people who think differently. She's respectful. She reaches out."

That should serve her well on Capitol Hill. Upon graduating from Utah State, Bowen intends to earn a master's in public policy and continue on to Washington, D.C., to devote her life to public service. Her love for the city goes "beyond the sparkly marble walls," she said. "It is the place where the country invests its trust in its leaders. Government is not just crazy elections; it's the policies that shape things."

Bowen was the university's nominee for a 2013 Truman Scholarship, an award which comes with a $30,000 prize for graduate study, a strong career network for public servants, and special internship opportunities within the federal government. The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation was created through an Act of Congress in 1974 as a living memorial to honor the nation's 33rd president and support the next generation of public servants and nonprofit leaders.

The 2013 Truman Scholars were selected from a field of 629 candidates nominated by 293 colleges and universities. Recipients were evaluated on the basis of academic and leadership accomplishments and the likelihood of becoming public service leaders. Bowen's application included a proposal addressing the fiscal sustainability of Medicare.

She outlined a series of recommendations designed to cut program costs and create additional revenue streams to keep the program solvent. Her plan called for gradually raising the payroll tax for both employers and employees .4 percent over a period of four years; increasing income-related premiums on affluent seniors; and enabling the Department of Health and Human Services to negotiate costs with pharmaceutical companies.

"It's not uncomplicated," Bowen admitted.

But it's also personal.

"Health policy is to me a great deal more than projections and statistical models—it is the grand national framework that determines whether or not some 20-year-old college students get a shot at the other four fifths of their lives," she wrote in her application. "That is a cause to which I find my career worth dedicating."

In April, Utah State President Stan Albrecht called her into his office under the guise of discussing the Honor's Program. Inside several of Bowen's professors emerged to alert her she was one of 62 students awarded a Truman Scholarship. Among those present was Lyons and Susan Andersen, a lecturer in the English department who teaches the Honors course *Preparing for Scholarships, Fellowships, and Graduate School Applications*. She coached Bowen through the essay writing process and recalls when Bowen was announced as the fourth Truman Scholar in USU history—the university's only female recipient—and the first winner since 1984.

"It was just such an exciting moment," Andersen said. "It comes with a responsibility, too."

One of the conditions for accepting a Truman Scholarship is a commitment to work in public service for three years after completing a graduate degree funded by the award. Since her bout with cancer, Bowen has felt public service is her calling. She believes it is how she will make the greatest impact.

For instance, in fall 2012 she worked as a regional field director for Scott Howell's senate bid against Orrin Hatch. While Bowen had no delusions the campaign would be easy or even victorious, she signed on for the position because she felt it would make a difference regardless of the outcome.

"We thought we might be able to change the climate a little bit," Bowen said. "It was remarkable to see how many people were concerned about the gridlock in Washington."

She aims to bring pragmatism to the capital. She believes that is the mark of good leadership. "Conflict will happen, disagreements in belief will happen; however, you still need to work together, you still need to compromise," she said. "It's better to take one step forward than nothing at all. My own personal worldview is 20 percent idealism—raw unfettered idealism—10 percent absolute cynicism, and 70 percent pragmatism. At the end of every bill that comes out of committee is someone like me."

While Bowen is focused on healthcare policy now, she also has interests in law enforcement and national security. Her Honors thesis analyzes the intersection between the Secret Service and executive privilege. The Truman Scholarship will help serve as a bridge between opportunities Bowen pursues—whatever those may be.

"I am really not closing doors," she said. "It was reinforced to me that this award doesn't really belong to me. It's not about advancing one person's career. It's an investment in the future." ■

TEDx USU

USING *her* VOICE

I want to continually be an advocate for change...I think that's going to be the next focus for me—learning these different avenues so I can use my voice.

—Taylor Halversen, '14

TAYLOR HALVERSEN STOOD IN the spotlight at the Chase Fine Arts Center and paced across the stage, touting the power of student potential. She was one of eight speakers and performers at the university's TEDx Conference in November 2012 and the only student presenter. Halversen, a rather opinionated junior double majoring in liberal arts and communication studies, described her experience at Utah State and outlined the needs of college students today.

"I recognize that not very many students get this opportunity to speak to such a large group of people who are here to listen," she began. "However, this has been somewhat of a consistent theme for me throughout my education—people listening. People creating an environment where I have been heard, where I have had the opportunity to flourish, and grow in everything that I have done."

Halversen's talk "The Conversion" chronicled how one experimental class provided her with the focus, tools, and opportunity to create something »

Taylor Halversen gave a talk titled "The Conversion" as part of the university's TEDx conference in November. She was the only student presenter and discussed the importance of challenging students and giving them the opportunity to rise to the occasion.

truly original. The experience taught her that most students are like her—potential in search of direction—and must be tested to really comprehend their abilities.

"Students need to find these environments that will push them," she told the audience. "The faculty need to create them…Allow them to articulate their voice. They will rise to the challenge. More than that, administration needs to listen as they did here at Utah State University because when they did it was magical."

It all began over email Halversen's freshman year when a course listing appeared in her inbox. The message was vague; a pilot design class was being offered on a pass/fail basis to a handful of Honors students with the caveat that it would not count for credit towards their majors. At the time, Halversen didn't have one and felt lost. She enrolled because it seemed like a good place to start finding her path.

"I don't know why, but I couldn't stop thinking about it," Halversen said. "It was probably the luckiest thing that ever happened to me…it taught me how to think big."

The 15 students participating in *Design Studio* were tasked with studying how undergraduates navigate the university, and then they employed principles of design thinking to streamline it. The class was co-taught by Jennifer Peeples, associate professor of speech communication, and instructors from the Business Innovation Factory (BIF), a nonprofit focused on innovation in areas of high social impact. It was funded through a grant from Lumina Foundation for Education to study how students track their academic progress, utilize university resources, and articulate the skills and competencies they learn in college. To do this, the people most affected by the research were enlisted to tackle the problem: students. The course culminated with a presentation to university leaders with recommendations to transform the system.

"I don't think anyone understood what we were going to do. Our teachers didn't even know," Halversen said. "Because it pulled me out of my comfort zone so much I was able to develop skills I didn't know I had."

The students broke into teams and interviewed their peers and personnel university-wide. There was no red-tape. After dozens of interviews a common thread appeared; a disconnect existed between what resources and services the university provided and which students knew about and utilized. At the close of the course, Halversen's team unveiled a proposal to develop an online tool to simplify the student experience by merging existing resources onto one website that was interactive and personalized for each student. Vice President of Student Services James Morales was in the audience. And he was impressed. Afterward his office sponsored a continuation of the course for students to build prototypes of an e-student services site and make it a reality. Morales tapped staff to investigate how the designs could be developed into a workable model. Halversen signed on for the second iteration.

The students spent the 2011 spring semester creating three prototypes that were customizable and designed with a user's changing needs over time. They beta tested the models on their peers. The prototype Halversen's group devised was organized into three hubs of information, including academics, resources, and social life, and based on interactive gaming principles. Users could sync their social calendars and view a progress bar that reflected their status towards graduation.

"We are going to take what you've given us to move into implementation phase," Morales told students at the final presentation. "This was our goal all along. This is not just an experiment up in the clouds. Whatever we develop, we want to honor all the great work you did."

Halversen was one of three students asked to serve as student advisors as the project moved forward. The university hired a project manager in December to continue the efforts and the new site called MyUSU should enter beta testing this summer and come online this fall—just in time for Halversen's younger sister to use it as a freshman. Had a tool like this been available her first year, it would have saved her time and stress, Halversen said. Without older siblings to ask about college, she arrived at Utah State without really understanding what it all meant.

"I didn't realize a major was a conglomerate of classes," Halversen said. "I thought that it was what you were supposed to be for the rest of your life. I didn't even register that [college] was school…I thought it was this place where you got a syringe in you and you got knowledge and you came out and you were an adult. My whole life I had been preparing to just have that syringe and be gone."

Much of her first semester, Halversen ran on raw energy and fear. She changed majors several times and operated under the mantra don't fail, do good, she said. "It was a strong motivation. Now I am trying to find a better motivation to do things—not fear. I'm trying to do it because I love to do things, which is hard to discover going into your senior year."

In some ways, taking *Design Studio* has worked for and against Halversen because her introduction to the university was through an effort to change it. While the unconventional course showed her firsthand how transforming education can be, afterward she went through a period of withdrawal trying to find a new outlet to harness her energy.

"We created something," Halversen said. "I thrive on that. I learned a different way to think because of this class. It has changed my whole way of learning…I was really spoiled coming in and having that be my first experience at Utah State. At the beginning it was really good because I went into this being able to point out any problem and challenge it so that I wasn't sucked into this vortex of I am just a number."

But she also knows what is possible and it bothers her when she runs into obstacles that can be fixed, but aren't. For instance, Halversen argues more flexibility is needed in the curriculum for students who want to enroll in classes outside their majors and colleges.

"They also need a personalized experience," Halversen said. "It's not just about the attention that each student gets; it's about the experience that each student gets. And I think that is something that's not being looked into."

She aims to spend her senior year gaining technical skills. The *Design Studio* class taught her to think big. With the acquisition of hard skills, she wants to be able to put her ideas into action, she said. "I want to continually be an advocate for change…I think that's going to be the next focus for me—learning these different avenues so I can use my voice." —*km*

SCRIBENDI

Each spring, the Department of English publishes *Scribendi*, a collection of winning entries from the university's Creative Writing Contest. All Utah State students can submit poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and art work for consideration. The 2012-13 competition received 149 entries from 22 disciplines and spanning six colleges. Poetry by Jeffrey Howard, a graduate student in English, and Sarah Thomas, a senior creative writing and anthropology major, was selected by the editorial staff of *Liberalis* to appear in the summer issue. Read all of the winning entries at www.scribendi.usu.edu.

Jeffrey Howard was born in Richland, Washington, in 1985. He grew up on dairy farms in Washington and Idaho and his experience with agriculture and farming have greatly influenced the subject matter of his poetry. Howard graduated in May with a master's of arts in English-literature and writing from Utah State. He will begin a doctoral program in English and the teaching of English at Idaho State University in the fall.

THE BACK PASTURE HILL By Jeffrey Howard, '13

1.
In summer, we climbed it often,
My sister Ju-Ju and I, carrying
carrot sticks and peanut butter
in Tupperware Mom collected
from yard sales.

We ate between black locusts
with their thorny bark,
played tag among Canadian thistle,
cow-pies dotted our playground
like green landmines.

Tired with our play
we paused by a clover patch.
I pressed grass blades between
my thumbs and mimicked
those mallards and drakes
in Stinsons' pond.

Ju-Ju picked a piece of grass
but couldn't echo my song;
she scowled, tossed the blade,
then swatted mine away.

2.
When September snap replaced August sun,
fall-air forced us indoors. Winter
brought snow crust muffling
pasture-grass pitches.

Our elbows placed on window sills
we gawked at icicles dangling
low from leaf-packed gutters,
counted water-drips streaking
porch-boards like layered candlewax.

Once a minute we glanced
at the white rise beyond our calf sheds;
we'd climb it again in March,
sink among the chest-high rye stems,
finger each tiller, each pliant node—
never minding the cow-pies—
and I'd teach her my grass-blade tune.

Sarah Thomas graduated with a bachelor's of arts in English in May. She has published poems and essays in *Kolob Canyon Review*, *Scribendi*, and *Panacea*. Thomas was recently awarded an URCO grant to travel to O'ahu to research a specific group of Hawaiian Mormon converts, the people of the Iosepa settlement in Utah, for a piece on spiritual lands and transplantation. Thomas still finds time to work odd jobs like night hawking, searching for medicinal and food plants in Logan Canyon, and volunteering at the Cache County Jail in the Women's Meditation Program.

BLACK DRESS ELEGY By Sarah Thomas, '13

I wore the peasant-girl dress today,
long black skirt blooming
with tiny red and yellow flowers
that last brushed pollen over my skin
the morning I watched your graduation.

After the ceremony,
your mother drove a rental car
up the limestone canyon east of town,
past clumps of sage and fallen oak buried in snow.
The whole earth shook like a white tambourine
as she parked beside a frozen lake.
Your parents had never seen snow before,
so we taught them how to fall like angels,
swim like fishes through the crystals.

I wore that old dress today
and sat on the cold porch, reading tragic Jewish poems.
Celan helped me remember loving you
like poppy and recollection,
the dark milk of morning that followed.
Through the black fabric,
I felt your hand on my thigh,
lifted the hem,
and prayed through my teeth for rain.

The snow made us wild.
We scooped and flung it with our paws.
rubbed it in each other's faces
until our skins turned red.
My dress soaked through
and my body lit fire,
but I could not tell you.
Walking back to the car,
you combed the snow for fallen cigarettes
While I squatted over your long dark hairs,
stirring them over the glittering ground with a stick,
trying to divine a pattern.

I wore that old black dress today
and watched the tree undress.
I listened to the autumn static
warming up like a gramophone,
the scratch and pop of falling leaves
spinning beneath the needle.
I turned the dial up high,
and the leaves grew loud
and crashed like stones into the earth.

when CULTURE *is* MISSING

One question changed the course of Jeannie Johnson's career at the Central Intelligence Agency.

Culture matters. At least that's what Jeannie Johnson, assistant professor of political science, argues in the methodology she devised for intelligence analysts.

IT WAS 1999. JOHNSON, AN ASSISTANT professor of political science at Utah State, had just been tapped to serve at the U.S. embassy in Croatia. The NATO bombing campaign over Serbia was at its peak. Most of the elite runners registered for the Belgrade Marathon had pulled out of the race because the threat of more attacks loomed. Yet photos surfaced of dozens of individuals running the course wearing black target signs on their backs.

"Who are these Serbs?" the U.S. ambassador yelled while pounding the table.

The question rolled over in Johnson's mind. She had worked as a member of the Balkan Task Force trying to project the behavior of Serbians and Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milosevic during a potential bombing campaign against Serbia. Combined military and intelligence reports predicted the mission would take three days. Serbian leaders didn't fold for 78. No one expected this reaction by the Serbian people on race day. Johnson wondered if perhaps they should have.

"It was the epiphany moment that changed my track," she said. "Until that, I was reared in traditional political science theory, which is culture doesn't matter."

But the images of Serbians defiantly running showed it does. Upon returning to the United States, Johnson began examining how the intelligence community reviews data. Analysts were using broad national profiles in its investigations, creating reports based on a profile of a nation's elite, but not accounting for variations in its population. »

RESEARCH

Our 'can do' anything attitude, like being the first to walk on the moon, colors our view of the world and what we can accomplish. In the past, military engagements have involved an effort to change a region's culture, behaviors and belief systems. Most of the time, that doesn't work.

—Jeannie Johnson

Johnson realized this could prove disastrous in foreign policy decisions.

"Every culture has a lot of competing narratives in it," she said.

Analyzing the wrong one may come at the expense of the nation's reputation, treasure, and human lives. Johnson began working to develop a methodology that could be applied to any group and yield defensible, actionable results. Her goal was to devise a better forecasting system to prescribe targeted security strategies that reduce surprises in the field and highlight planning deficiencies. Johnson knew it had to be manageable for the intelligence analysts who must sort through a barrage of material every day. She also understood their recommendations could be flawed if they don't examine the role national and organizational cultures play in the formation of security policy into their reports.

"I've been a line analyst," Johnson said. "I knew this is missing."

She spent the next six years delving into the realm of anthropology, exploring accepted views on culture, and developing the framework. In 2007, she sent a draft to Matthew T. Berrett to review. He was serving at that time as the director for the Office of the Near East South Asian division and she prodded him for three months to read it. At the time, the country was steeped in its military commitments in Iraq and an insurgency had metastasized that no one seemed to have predicted. One evening Johnson's office phone rang at 9:30 p.m. She picked up and the two began collaborating to refine the predictive model.

They began introducing the methodology to junior analysts who were not already entrenched in previous intelligence procedures. During intelligence briefings with President George W. Bush, the junior analysts proved themselves to have a depth of analysis that surprised even the most seasoned intelligence agents, Johnson said.

They were examining potential conflicts through a different lens. Instead of focusing on the rhetoric between opposing factions, they were studying the traditions behind them. They understood how leaders talked to each other. When the methodology was applied to actual conflict scenarios the junior analysts would see their predictions play out in real-time.

"In this position your analytical tool either works or it doesn't," Johnson said.

It did.

The methodology—which Johnson and Berrett call cultural topography—uses a looping feedback approach to collect cultural data for political and security analysis. Instead of proving or dispelling a hypothesis, the goal is to answer one question: how might this be useful to the intelligence community?

Cultural topography begins with identifying an issue of strategic interest, and the issue itself may change as more information is learned throughout the process. The next step involves selecting an actor for focused study and amassing a range of cultural influences on that group. The analyst then applies four different perspectives to augment the results, including identity—the character traits a group assigns to itself; norms—accepted modes of behavior of its members; values; and perceptual lens—how the group gathers its views and information about others in the world. The idea is to pinpoint culture-specific patterns and determine where they arise. For instance, is the trait one shared across a nation, a specific ethnic group, or a generation?

Johnson and Berrett spent four more years sharpening the methodology before publishing it for the intelligence community in 2011. The research protocol is now being used in various offices within the Department of Defense and across the intelligence community. However, Johnson also teaches it in classrooms at Utah State. Students in her *Strategic Culture* class select an issue of national security to research and assess it using the tenets of cultural topography.

Piper Blotter,'09, a graduate student in the political science department, enrolled specifically because of Johnson's work. While investigating different master's programs, she did not find many with a specified track for studying strategic culture. Blotter believes the field is simply going to grow as more people understand its value.

"This kind of research is actually useful," she said. "You can use it to make a real difference. That's important. That's why we do this. As a political scientist that's why I want to do it."

Blotter was first exposed to the field as an undergraduate in Johnson's *Strategic Culture* course. The Pentagon had recently released a study warning that Mexico was at risk for becoming a failed state because of its government's tenuous control over drug cartels. Blotter's group researched the various Mexican drug cartels and found each had its own signature and culture. During the semester she held an internship with the Cultural Intelligence Institute where she shared its findings.

"It's neat to have a classroom experience that had broader applications," Blotter said. "You realize that what you are doing could have impact in the real world, not just sitting on a dusty shelf."

Mike Burnham,'13, a dual economics and international studies major, enrolled in the class to engage in research and gain a different perspective on international relations.

"I knew she was going to work us," he said. "Jeannie gets the best out of her students…It can be a painful process at times."

Students describe working with Johnson as a two-way street: If you work hard, she will work hard for you. She tries to open doors for them in the policy world and many have benefited from her advocacy. Students have served posts in embassies around the world and been recruited by various intelligence agencies. Johnson herself was recruited while attending Utah State in the 1990s.

When pressed to find a research topic, Burnham decided to study how the Internet shapes violent movements. He was familiar with conversations about lone wolf terrorists using the Internet as a tool, but was there truth in any of them?

"It's something that's talked about a lot but never really explored in depth," Burnham said.

He visited online forums that were considered hubs for terrorists in the Middle East hoping to learn more about their beliefs and use of the Internet. However, many sites were protected and difficult to access, operating by invitation only. Burnham changed tack and began exploring how white supremacist groups in the United States utilized the Internet. These networks proved easier to crack.

"On any given day, at any given time you would find hundreds of people online," Burnham said. "The Internet is organized around ideas. It's easy to connect with likeminded people. In the real world we are organized by geography. We are friends with people who live close to us."

He was surprised by people's willingness to share their opinions with him. But anonymity allows people to say things they wouldn't in public, often without consequence or question. For instance, someone curious about a particular philosophy logs onto an ideological forum and finds themselves in a supportive environment to voice opinions with others who share the same views. The Internet can create a polarizing effect where the company we keep online can reinforce what we believe, Burnham said.

"In the real world there is diversity by necessity," he said. "Anonymity is the central driving entity of the Internet. Without it all this would fall apart, but good luck getting rid of that."

Johnson passed his research paper "*Anonymity Catalyzes Radicalization Among Internet Community*" up the chain where it was examined by a cyber security firm abroad and security agencies in the United States Burnham is now studying nationalism, partisanship, and identity politics. He is applying the same methods to examine the effect of the Internet on partisan behavior.

"I think it's dangerous in real political dialogue," he said. "You fail to see [the other side] as human beings with rational thought."

Both he and Johnson were slated to present their work at a conference of the Cultural Intelligence Institute in Washington, D.C., this spring. However, it was cancelled due to sequestration cuts. Nevertheless, Johnson continues to work with members of the intelligence community and Department of Defense to improve cultural research methods and analysis. She regularly presents her work at the military command centers across the country and was recently invited to give a talk to the Marine Corps. Johnson warned organizers that what she had to say might not be well received.

She points to her doctoral dissertation "*Assessing the Strategic Impact of Service Culture on Counterinsurgency Operations*" which used the Marines as a case study to showcase her methodology, and argues that they and other American military groups have a "weird, self-imposed amnesia to counter insurgency," Johnson said.

In other words, we forget our history. We forget what didn't work in the past and why. And then repeat the same mistakes. She quotes Sun Tzu, an ancient Chinese philosopher and general, who said "in the military—knowing the other and knowing oneself, in one hundred battles no danger," and contends that Americans do not often remember the second part of the adage.

"Americans think they know themselves," Johnson said. "We think we are very rational in our military actions. We aren't. We are ahistorical. We don't pay attention to our own history. We reinvent the wheel a lot. We have to get over that or we are going to spend a lot of lives figuring it out."

As Johnson worked to refine her methodology and research her dissertation, she found herself bouncing between military briefings on the war in Afghanistan and reading letters of generals in Vietnam giving their accounts of the situation on the ground.

"It made the hair on the back of my neck stand up," she said. "What they reported and what generals in Afghanistan were saying were eerily similar."

One set of readings particularly struck a haunting chord. In 1968, William R. Corson, a commanding officer in Vietnam published the book *The Betrayal*. He had directed the Combined Action Program—one of the few arguably successful missions in the conflict—where U.S. Marines served with the members of the South Vietnamese militia to flush out insurgents in villages. The book brought to light the military and cultural miscalculations made in Washington about operations in Vietnam.

In it Corson also introduced the concepts that made his operation work. He incorporated the same elements Johnson and Berrett recommend; he just called them different things. The copy on her desk is literally dog eaten—portions of the binding have been torn off by the canine of the Marine who gave it to her. Dozens of pink post it notes flag pages of interest.

"It was like a voice from the dead," Johnson said.

More so, it gave her confidence that the methodology they were developing worked. It had already been applied in a kinetic environment. Yet somehow, its message was lost.

"We have been so successful at duping ourselves," Johnson said. "Vietnam wasn't that long ago. Yet people in charge, many who served in Vietnam, are repeating the same mistakes."

There are several reasons this happens. One involves the biases in American culture. Johnson notes in her research the U.S. military's preference for conventional warfare rather than small-scale operations that require less boots on the ground. Another is the country's "unsinkable optimism" which permeates Americans' understanding of the economy, politics, and foreign relations. Johnson suggests it can lead to efforts to achieve the impossible, or an unwillingness to invest in those that take time, money, and manpower.

"We don't very often articulate to our policymakers 'that is going to cost you generations of time,'" she said. "Our 'can do' anything attitude, like being the first to walk on the moon, colors our view of the world and what we can accomplish. In the past, military engagements have involved an effort to change a region's culture, behaviors and belief systems. Most of the time, that doesn't work."

Johnson knows changing how the United States evaluates foreign policy is not going to occur overnight. Almost everything she advocates goes against the grain from academic, military, and intelligence standpoints. But it helps that she is working with someone on the inside of the intelligence community who can nudge the methodology forward.

"We are swimming against the tide in every arena," Johnson said.

It may be worth a try. —*km*

rethinking HIGHER EDUCATION

By Kristen Munson

The class began with a warning of psychic dismemberment. Anthropology professor Bonnie Glass-Coffin's experimental course on shamanism required students to push their personal boundaries. They would practice meditation, build their own spiritual mesas, and show vulnerability. The idea rattled some professors who feared she might be perceived as teaching religion in the classroom. Meetings were called. Discussions were held. One year later, students and faculty continue to consider higher education—what it is, what it should be, and what it can be.

A liberal arts education values the culture of the inner person as well as the understanding of what's happening in the world.

—Bonnie Glass-Coffin

WHEN PARTICIPATION MATTERS

Glass-Coffin developed *Introduction to Shamanism: Shamanic Healing for Personal and Planetary Transformation* knowing the course might strike a few administrative nerves. Students would be taught the fundamentals of shamanism and acquire the toolkit of the shaman by participating in rituals such as guided meditation and chanting. The course was designed to lead students and their professor out of their academic comfort zones. In the past, Glass-Coffin taught the class from a purely academic perspective, but the curriculum didn't allow for individual participation in the material. It just didn't go there.

Glass-Coffin—a shamanism scholar and Utah's 2004 Carnegie Teacher of the Year—thought perhaps it should. She is certified to teach a cross-cultural form of Peruvian shamanism known as the Pachakuti Mesa, and wanted to try teaching a version where students use shamanic practices for their own spiritual transformations. For the purposes of the class, Glass-Coffin defined spiritual as a connection to something greater than oneself.

"I knew that I had a tried and true curriculum I could follow and that I had participated in as a learner," she said. "I have seen how it does transform people's lives."

She pitched the idea to Dean John C. Allen who endorsed the class, provided it was an elective. Once she received the proper permits to light candles in the classroom, Glass-Coffin felt she had the credentials and support to explore what teaching could be. However, not everyone agreed.

"A couple of the professors didn't think it was appropriate to have that happening on a college campus," she said. "I was explicitly talking about spirituality and people were concerned 'is this teaching religion?' But I am not teaching doctrine. I am providing students with a method that students can use to explore their own spirituality."

Glass-Coffin met with concerned faculty members to alleviate lingering concerns. The session lasted two hours and seems to unofficially mark the start of a renewed line of questioning in the college: what does higher education look like?

"It's been fun to be kind of a catalyst," Glass-Coffin said.

Beth Walden, '13, recalls the first day of the class. Glass-Coffin flipped on a video that showed a man—don Oscar Miro-Quesada, founder of the methodology she teaches—arranging an assortment of stones and candles on a cloth while chanting. »

Beth Walden (left) and Bonnie Glass-Coffin (right) arrange their spiritual mesas in front of Tom Marion's "22 Line Drawings" at the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art.

"My first reaction was, this is pretty weird," Walden said.

But as she continued to watch the screen she started thinking it looked weird—and fun. Glass-Coffin handed out waivers warning students of the possibility of "psychic dismemberment," which stated students couldn't hold the university accountable for any personal transformations they may have.

"The whole point of the waiver was to scare students off," Glass-Coffin said. "I wanted students to know what they were getting into."

Because if students weren't interested in participating, she didn't want them in the class—participation was the point. But the waivers didn't trim enrollment; only two dropped the course. For Walden, the warning was more like a promise. She already has a doctorate degree and worked for 25 years at Utah State before returning to school for a bachelor's in religious studies because she wanted to dig deeper into studies of spirituality.

"I was looking for conversations," Walden said. "If you Google spirituality you're not going to get anywhere. I came back [to school] to give myself permission to ask questions."

One afternoon before class, Walden's ailing father died. Yet, 40 minutes later, she walked through the door—right foot first in accordance with class procedure. Showing up to a place where she was expected to bring her heart with her was comforting, Walden said. "I was not expected to separate my grief from my college experience."

Walden also worked as an undergraduate advisor at Utah State for five years, a position that reinforced to her that not all students have the same expectations about college. Some want to take required classes to graduate and move on. Others don't—they are hoping for a real life change, she said. Walden believes experiential courses like Glass-Coffin's are one way to achieve this.

"I think it's necessary for those who are missing this type of experience," she said. "It's not for everyone, but it needs to be an option. It's time to get together and have conversations and give permission to those instructors who want to bring their hearts with them into the classroom. We need to decide what college is going to be for."

Glass-Coffin's shamanism course is nontraditional in the sense that students do not sit in chairs and she does not lecture from the front of the class. Instead, she is seated with them on the ground. The students keep journals and take turns sharing their experiences with the material.

"It's really the basics for civil dialogue," Glass-Coffin said.

She admits her course falls on the far end of the spectrum of how college classes should be, but she believes opportunities need to exist for professors and students who want to engage in these types of contemplative educational practices. She presses for a more holistic approach to teaching and learning, arguing that emotions belong in the classroom because they help build community and a shared sense of humanity.

"A liberal education values the culture of the inner person as well as the understanding of what's happening in the world," Glass-Coffin said.

She cites a longitudinal study conducted by researchers at The Higher Education Research Institute where thousands of students and faculty members from institutions nationwide were surveyed about their beliefs and practices regarding spirituality and religion. The findings revealed nearly 70 percent of students want college to enhance their self-understanding and 48 percent expect college to encourage their expressions of spirituality. However, nearly half report being dissatisfied with the opportunities provided by their universities for spiritual or religious reflection. For Glass-Coffin, the study indicates students want more from their college experience than a diploma at graduation.

'WHAT EDUCATION IS FOR'

Harrison Kleiner teaches philosophy at Utah State and agrees big questions involving spirituality and religion should be up for discussion in college—just not in a course like Glass-Coffin's that involve an experiential component. When he heard about the proposed shamanism class, Kleiner was concerned the requirements violated what he felt were the personal rights of students.

"I am not against experiential learning in general," he said. "I am against the idea that a course would require you to participate in something that goes against your conscience or beliefs."

While raising big questions in a class is important, what might be unethical is requiring students to practice a belief system, he said. "That is why I distinguish between the priest and the teacher. Priests care about practice and participation in a worldview while educators teach ideas."

In the fall, he and Glass-Coffin were invited to participate in a semester-long seminar for faculty and students discussing philosophies of higher education. They read the book *The Heart of Higher Education* to use as a launch pad for debate. The group explored what should be taught in classrooms, what boundaries should remain, and which should be taken down. They agreed that all faculty members want to be able to teach passionately and see a change in students' hearts and minds. But how does one measure that? And does the current system allow it?

Megan Pehrson, an anthropology major who participated in both Glass-Coffin's shamanism class and the seminar, sees the value in both traditional teaching and experiential learning efforts. During a panel discussion in November 2012, Pehrson explained feeling that aspects of college are incomplete.

"As undergraduates I feel like we're always hurrying," she said. "We see people. But we don't really see people."

She took Glass-Coffin's class to slow down.

"I think that both ways of learning can have an impact," Pehrson said. "But that one class that's different, the one class where you're sitting on the floor instead of in the chairs, it can really change the way you interact with your peers and your learning. I feel excited because I feel there is a change. There is dialogue happening. I am graduating in May [2013], but maybe it will be different for students who come after me."

Kleiner agrees education should be transformative for students, but rejects the notion that personal development is not being addressed in college courses. He suggests some of the problems in higher education are not that universities aren't providing students with opportunities to explore the big questions—it's that they don't tout the value of general education courses and the disciplines that do.

"The problem is not that the questions are not being asked," he said. "In philosophy, this is the sort of thing we do."

What I am most excited about is that we will be encouraging students to think about the "why" of a college education.

—Harrison Kleiner

Kleiner is working to build more pathways for students to encounter big questions and rethink the purpose of higher education. And he's doing it through his preferred methodology: good books and good debate. In spring 2013, Kleiner received funding from the college to start a university-wide reading group. Students were supplied with the books. There were no grades. The 13 students were there because they wanted to be. The reading group named What is An Educated Person? met every Tuesday to analyze texts from Plato to Allan Bloom and discuss what education is really about. Kleiner hopes the book club will be a "mustard seed" from which conversations about higher education grow out of, he said.

"We need to have a conversation with students and with faculty about what education is for," Kleiner said.

He and Susan Shapiro, a professor of history, select readings and facilitate the discussions. They have a spirited dynamic where they often openly and respectfully disagree. And they encourage students to do the same. What becomes clear is this is not a class; it's an '*I think*' environment where reasoned opinions are welcome. Abigail Fritz,'14, came to Utah State on scholarship to study music, but realized she wanted to continue examining big ideas posed by the likes of Aristotle and Shakespeare.

"I really think that's why people are still reading them," she said. "It's the smartest people ever, comparing their best ideas, and we get to contribute to the conversation. One of the things I learned in high school was to value education for education's sake—not for the job you would get afterward."

Fritz has taken that to heart. That's why she didn't balk at taking on an additional 50 to 100 pages a week for work that is not graded and will not show up on her transcript. Fritz doesn't believe attending college for edification alone is necessarily going to pay the electric bill. And while she isn't sure what higher education should be, she knows she isn't alone.

"The great minds in history haven't agreed on it," she said. "I think you should be able to think for yourself and think critically. I'm not saying everyone should have a humanities education, but I do think it's important you understand the consequence of your actions and your opinions and know where they came from. Because then you can be intentioned about where you want to go."

She argues questions one should wrestle with in college like '*Who am I*'? are prerequisites for making one's way in the world. Some students come to college thinking it is a four year period where they come to learn and leave as a formed entity. Fritz says this isn't the case.

"Education isn't a section of my life," she said. "It affects the kind of person I am. My education isn't up to my professors and my teachers although they are a huge part of it. I have to wrestle with those questions myself."

While she isn't sure what her future entails, she suspects teaching will be part of it.

"I want to be an educated person," she said. "And hopefully I learn what that means." »

Harrison Kleiner listens as students debate during a meeting of the book club What is an Educated Person?

'NOT A SET OF BOXES'

Kleiner partnered with history professor Norm Jones, director of general education and curricular integration at USU, to alter how freshman perceive the university from day one. They worked with a faculty advisory committee to overhaul Connections, a weeklong freshman orientation course, so that in addition to familiarizing students with campus, it forces them to reflect on why they are here in the first place.

"We want to use Connections to make students intentional learners," Jones said. "Being an intentional learner is being an informed consumer."

The hope is to convey to students that their outcome depends on the pathways they choose and the opportunities they take advantage of early on. The purpose of general education classes will be explained. The idea is that by understanding what higher education is, and can be, students can graduate feeling they were in command of their experience and better understand the skills they acquired along the way.

"What I am most excited about is that we will be encouraging students to think about the *why* of a college education," Kleiner said. "Right now they think in terms of the major, and that is tied to their thinking about a job. But what we will be encouraging them to do is to think of the degree. The degree is bigger than the major. Gen Ed is not a set of boxes to check off; they are important parts in the process of becoming an educated person."

One change to Connections will be a book by Matt Sanders, an assistant professor of communication studies. He is the author of *Becoming a Learner*, a book he wrote for students entering college. It is not a cautionary tale despite his point in chapter one that earning degrees does not guarantee students a good job. That type of candor could rattle a new student. But it doesn't. In part, because Sanders assures students they benefit from college if they learn how to become a learner. He argues that skill will help them on the job market and in life.

"You will retain the most important thing—who you have become as a result of your studies," he writes. "You are not in college to buy something, you are here to become something. The most important things you learn will not be graded."

Throughout the book he asserts that college is not an obligation, but an opportunity to build character. Students learn to meet deadlines and work with others, conduct research and overcome challenges. Last year, a pilot group of instructors used the text during freshman orientation.

"The feedback has been really positive," Sanders said. "I think they're just hungry for this kind of conversation. This book is meant to get right to the students. I see it as a change agent."

The book stemmed from an epiphany he had before graduating college in 2002: he didn't know everything. But he was comforted by the idea that he could learn how to be better—and maybe that was the point. For the next decade he interviewed business and nonprofit leaders, compiled stories, and shared his philosophy of learning with students in an essay. While he believes students do learn valuable job skills at college, universities need to be clear about what college is, what it can do for students, and what they have to do for themselves.

"It's not a ticket to the middle class like it used to be," Sanders said. "The degree, that's your pass to get interviewed. The guarantee of being smarter than when you leave? There is no guarantee."

Sanders studies organizational communication and behavior. His interviews with employers indicate they want employees who are honest, dedicated, communicative, and dependable. In short, they want character—something students build every day in college. Sanders encourages students to be active participants in their education so they make the most of it.

"You can't just sit on the conveyor belt and say, '*make me special*.' Sitting on a conveyor belt makes you the same as everybody else," he said.

Word of Sanders' essay eventually bubbled up to Lisa Hancock, head of student orientation at USU, from students who had read it and loved it. She suggested Sanders publish it as a book. Colleges do a good job telling students how to earn the credits they need to graduate and presenting the logistics of the degree but not much else, she said. "Not a lot of people just stop and talk to students about why they're here. It's not about getting out of here and getting into the 'real world.' The reality is it's about more than that. Or at least, it can be."

The concept is gaining traction. One afternoon in April, a student approached Dean Allen on the Quad and handed him an essay reflecting on his educational experience. He was a student in Kleiner's book club. The student, Alex Tarbet, acknowledged it was his second try at college. The first time he didn't understand the purpose and left. He returned because he still had some unanswered questions about himself. Tarbet found a community in the book club, but he wrote of peers majoring in things they didn't care much about because they didn't know any better.

"They were never told that there is a possibility in college to do things you love," he said. "To hell with money – the subject interests you, draws so much passion out of you that you do it for fun. It feeds that hunger. It sparks something. This possibility lies in the magic embers up here at the university, particularly in Old Main…I hope the university continues to re-examine what it means to be an educated person, and maintains its rigorous humanities program. I hope someone asks students why they are here, so that they might have an answer." ■

BELOW: Matt Sanders authored the book *Becoming a Learner: Realizing the Opportunity of Education for Students.*

Brandon R. Shrand

writing FAILURE *to be* BETTER

By Jacob Jensen

WRITING IS AN EPISTE-mological undertaking to give order to chaos for author Brandon R. Schrand. For him, literature helps us further understand what we know, what we don't, and try to access it. Schrand,'03, aims to make sense of his own world with his new book *Works Cited: An Alphabetical Odyssey of Mayhem and Misbehavior*. The book, published in March, follows a curious structure—a memoir written in the format of a works cited page.

The idea for using the works cited format originated while Schrand was teaching a graduate nonfiction class about experimental forms for essays at the University of Idaho, where he is an assistant professor. Schrand was intrigued by the notion of writing an entire essay following the format of a works cited page and wrote one titled "*Works Cited*," which was featured in *The Missouri Review* in 2008.

After performing a reading of the piece at the Hemingway Festival in Sun Valley, Idaho, Joshua Ferris, author of the national bestseller *Then Came We to the End*, suggested "*Works Cited*" had great potential as a book. Schrand considered the idea and sat in his library flipping through books, looking for "triggers of memory," he said.

As he leafed through pages of books he read growing up he found notes, plane tickets, and even the phone number of a girl he had placed between the pages; each item tied to a memory. Schrand selected works for his memoir that were important contributors to his journey from boyhood to manhood, including Ernest Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea*, David Foster Wallace's *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*, and S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*. Schrand doesn't limit *Works Cited* to the happier moments of his life. He includes many not-so-flattering moments and details some personal failures.

"I choose to write honestly about the vulnerabilities of the human condition by first implicating myself. I think it is important that we make ourselves uncomfortable," he said. "If you're unwilling to make yourself uncomfortable, whether that means traveling to a foreign country, trying a new kind of cuisine, or reading engaging literature, or watching artful film, then you really aren't living, not in any meaningful sense anyway. The so-called taboos in my book—sex, drugs, alcohol, promiscuity—are just as central to the human condition as anything deemed 'normal.'"

Schrand hopes readers will find some part of themselves within *Works Cited*.

"I write candidly about what it means to fail as a human, father, lover, husband, writer, student, whatever, and what it means to get back up and do better, and to be better," he said. "That, I think, is a universal experience."

FACULTY BOOKS PUBLISHED FROM JANUARY TO AUGUST 2013

Shanan Ballam, *Pretty Marrow* (Negative Capability Press, 2013)

Brock Dethier, *Twenty-One Genres and How to Write Them* (Utah State University Press, 2013)

Patricia Gantt (co-editor), *Appalachia in the Classroom: Teaching the Region* (Ohio University Press, 2013)

Joshua Thoms (co-editor), *Hybrid language teaching and learning: Exploring theoretical, pedagogical, and curricular issues* (Boston: Heinle Cengage, 2013)

***CORRECTION:** The author of *Cave Culture in Maghrebi Literature: Imagining Self and Nation* (Lexington Books, 2012) was misidentified in the January 2013 issue of *Liberalis*. Christa Jones is the author of the book.

PRAISE FOR PRETTY MARROW

Readers should approach Shanon Ballam's debut poetry collection with caution. Inside, imaginary rats scratch inside the walls and wolves are everyday people. The voices speak in uncertain tones, and the poems grab you and make your blood whoosh. Lance Larsen, the former poet laureate of Utah, calls the debut poetry collection "a book of brave, unflinching witness, tempered by the promise of transformation." Ballam,'98, MA '01, teaches creative writing in the Department of English.

FINDING HOME WITH THE DAYS ARE GODS

Liz Stephens' memoir begins in 110 degree heat in Southern California on the set of a Taco Bell commercial where she is part of the production crew. She is in charge of snacks. And she is nearly invisible. *The Days Are Gods* chronicles Stephens' move to Cache County to attend graduate school at Utah State and her struggle to fit in to her new community. Stephens is a past winner of the Western Literature Association's Frederick Manfred Award and a finalist for the Annie Dillard Creative Nonfiction Award.

At Utah State, Karin deJonge-Kannan co-directs the Master of Second Language Teaching program.

a step TOWARDS PEACE

By **Karin deJonge-Kannan**, senior lecturer of linguistics

PEOPLE ARE ROUTINELY divided into two groups: us and them. We see this breakdown almost daily in the news when reading about conflicts in politics, sports, religion, and culture. However, people will remain 'other' until we spend time interacting with them to work on common goals. I do not believe a single-nation group will solve the problems facing our world today; all of us must work together to develop solutions. Bringing international guests to the United States serves as an effective element of such an approach and it has been my great pleasure to help organize and host such opportunities.

My desire to organize programs for international guests is rooted in something that retired Secretary of State Colin Powell stated in the public radio program *This I Believe*, "A good stay in our country is the best public diplomacy tool we have." The U.S. Department of State, through its Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), has long supported professional exchange programs for foreign artists, athletes, teachers, journalists, legislators, and entrepreneurs to foster peaceful relations between the United States and their home countries. This is my motivation for applying for ECA-funded grants to bring international guests to our campus.

In the summer of 2011, USU hosted 39 university students from around the world for 8 weeks of English-language learning and cross-cultural interaction. The students lived on our campus, shopped in our stores, met local people, carried out service-learning projects in the community, and got a much better impression of the USA and its people than they could ever gain through the movies. My favorite memory of that summer is rafting the Colorado River in Moab with a large group of young people who claimed not to be able to swim—and almost all the rafts tipped over in the raging river! We learned that life-jackets are terrific, and that friends will keep each other from drowning even when they don't share the same language or religious background.

The other ECA-funded projects I have been involved with have brought teachers to our campus. In a collaborative effort between the School for Teacher Education and Leadership and the Master of Second Language Teaching program, USU has twice hosted a group of about 20 high school teachers from around the world. The international teachers stayed on our campus for six weeks and were paired with a local teacher in Logan or Cache County school district. They observed classes, taught lessons, and ate in the school cafeteria. In several cases, the students of the local teacher interacted with students of the international teacher through Skype or other Internet communication tools.

Our time together taught us respect for one another's professionalism. We shared creative approaches to finding the right balance between meeting our students' individual needs and preparing them for standardized high-stakes tests. While the program centered on professional development, we also took the teachers on excursions. I particularly enjoyed hiking around Tony Grove with them, canoeing on the Cutler Marsh, and carving pumpkins together in my backyard for Halloween.

My department—Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies—is currently hosting two Fulbright Language Teaching Assistants from Egypt and Brazil who teach Arabic and Portuguese courses. At least as important as their instruction is their role as cultural ambassador and transnational bridge builder. For most students enrolled in first-year language classes with these scholars, this is their first interaction with someone from the target-language speaking community. Developing a relationship with a flesh-and-blood speaker goes a long way in motivating our students to persevere in the long process of learning a new language.

At present, my colleague, Maria Luisa Spicer-Escalante, and I are gearing up to host Fulbright scholars from Iraq. This project will bring scholars in English as a Foreign Language/Applied Linguistics to our campus for 10 weeks of professional development this summer and we look forward to learning with and from them. Among Iraqis, perceptions of the USA are likely to be mixed. We are fully confident that their stay at USU will help the scholars experience the best our country has to offer: kind people, excellent facilities, and spectacular nature.

Participating in these programs has brought me tremendous joy. Meeting people from all over the world is a privilege—but not only for travelers. Those of us who remain stateside can expand our understanding of the world by interacting with international guests right here. We can invite them into our classrooms, our homes, and our hearts. In my view, this is an important step in pulling down the divide between us and 'other' and to building world peace.

from the BOARD

Sometimes students with rather small financial needs drop out, thinking one day they will return to finish their degrees when they are more financially stable. More often than not they never come back to school. With the Make It or Break It Fund, students can apply for the necessary funds to complete their education. —Cece Foxley

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences Dean's Development Board is comprised of alumni committed to helping the school achieve its mission and pivot to meet critical needs for the future. Members support the college in a myriad of ways from teaching courses, providing career advice to students, and through financial contributions.

In 2012, members of the board established two scholarships to assist the college in its campaign to raise 100 new scholarships for deserving students. Gifts to the CHaSS Student Opportunity Fund support this effort. However, Cece Foxley, and board members Catherine Goodman, and Kathie Miller decided this was not enough.

In the spring, they spearheaded the creation of a second fund for students with financial hardships that may impede their completion of study at Utah State. The Make It or Break It Fund is supported by the CHaSS Dean's Development Board and enables Dean John C. Allen to award money to CHaSS students with critical needs such as funding one last class or purchasing books.

"This is not a loan," Dean Allen said. "We provide students money during emergency situations so they can stay in school."

Funds will be awarded for the first time to students this fall. Thank you to all the board members helping to keep higher education a dream within reach for CHaSS students.

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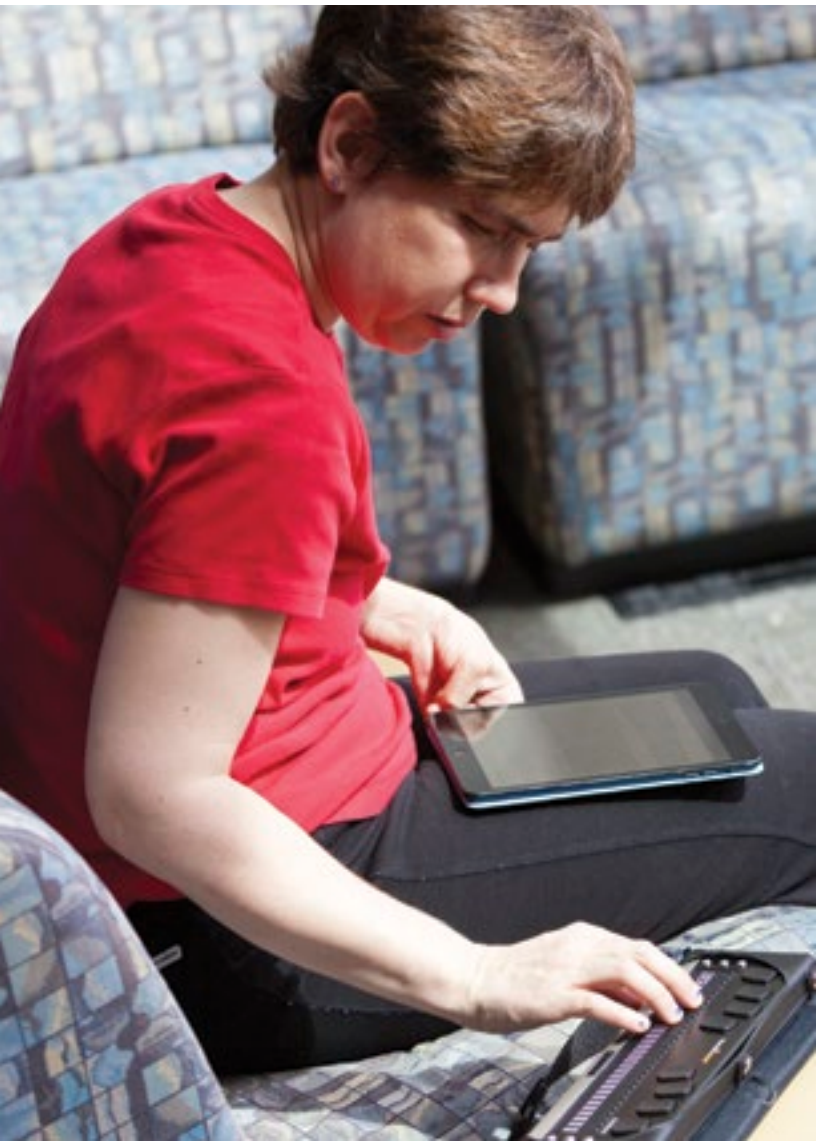

KASONDRA PAYNE, '13, LIFTS A PINK SCREEN protector off her iPad. An automated woman's voice states there are 93 new emails in her inbox. Payne methodically slides a finger across the glass touchscreen and opens a new document and begins typing. Her fingers swipe over a refreshable Braille display to review her work.

"These are the things I cannot live without," Payne said with a smile.

But that isn't really true. While advances in technology have made access to information easier, Payne has worked independently long before VoiceOver. She was born with a degenerative eye condition and has been legally blind since high school. She joined the National Federation for the Blind (NFB) at age 17.

"I needed role models," Payne said. "I needed someone who could demonstrate for me that I was going to be successful at whatever I wanted to do."

Now, she insists those with disabilities can and do become anything they want to be. The mother of three aims to show her children what is possible.

"We all work with what we have," she said. "It's really the same steps in a different way."

Payne is the 2013 recipient of the Legacy of Utah State Award, which recognizes a student who represents the heart and soul of the university through service and perseverance during times of adversity. The honor is deserved. Payne started a local chapter of the NFB where she lobbies on behalf of the visually impaired. She has traveled to Washington, D.C., three times advocating for the blind. And while working towards her bachelor's degree, she served as a note taker for other blind students and trained staff how to use technology in the Disability Resource Center.

"I want to work with people with disabilities for the rest of my life," Payne said. —*km*